

WHAT'S A VOTE WORTH? PAGE 11

# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #127, OCTOBER 24 – NOVEMBER 13, 2008  
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

## The Rule of Impunity

THE BRAD WILL INVESTIGATION TAKES A SHOCKING TURN, **PAGE 8–9**

Paramilitary gunman Pedro Carmona opens fire during anti-government street protests Oct. 27, 2006 in Santa Lucia del Camino, Oaxaca, Mexico. Moments later, New York City Indymedia journalist Brad Will was shot and fatally wounded on the same street. PHOTO: RAUL ESTRELLA/EL UNIVERSAL



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*The Indypendent* is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their time and energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Independent Press Association awards, *The Indypendent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging citizens to produce their own media. *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. Volunteers write and edit articles, take photographs, do design work and illustrations, help distribute papers, update the website and more! *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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## community calendar

The next open editorial meetings for *The Indypendent* are Tuesday, Oct. 28 and Nov. 18, at 7pm. 4 W 43rd St, Room 311. All are welcome. Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com

#### THROUGH SAT NOV 22

TUE-THU 10am-6pm; FRI 10am-8pm; SAT noon-8pm • \$5 Suggested Donation  
EXHIBIT: SIGNS OF CHANGE: SOCIAL MOVEMENT CULTURES 1960s TO NOW. Hundreds of posters, photographs, films, audio clips and ephemera bring to life over 40 years of activism, political protest and campaigns for social justice. Exit Art, 475 10th Ave (at 36th St) and 16 Beaver St, 4th Fl (btwn Whitehall & Broad Sts)  
Exit Art: 212-966-7745 • exitart.org; 16beaver: 212-480-2093 16beavergroup.org

#### WED OCT 29

7pm • FREE  
DISCUSSION: OPTING FOR ABORTION AND LIFE. Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner, co-authors of "Manifesta" and co-founders of Soapbox, Inc., lead a discussion on reproductive freedom without parenting. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

#### FRI OCT 31

7pm • FREE  
ACTION: HALLOWEEN RIDES AND TIME'S UP! HALLOWEEN AFTER-PARTY. Grab a bike and your scariest costume and get ready to ride through the streets screaming on the Halloween Critical Mass bike ride. Afterward, come to the Brooklyn side of the Williamsburg Bridge Bike Path to ride to the annual Time's Up! Halloween Party, which starts at 9pm. Critical Mass: Union Square Park North; Halloween Party Ride: Williamsburg Bridge Bike Path (Bklyn); TIME'S UP! Halloween Party: Surreal Estate, 15 Thames St (Btwn Bogart and Morgan, Bklyn). times-up.org

#### SAT NOV 1

6pm • FREE  
EVENT: AN EVENING IN HARLEM TO FREE THE CUBAN 5!  
The Cuban 5 are U.S.-held political prisoners who were jailed for protecting their homeland, Cuba, from right-wing terrorists based in Miami. The program will include a legal update and a showing of the film "Against the Silence in Our Own Voices: Families of the Cuban 5 Speak Out." Food available for a \$5 donation, and childcare is available with advance notice. Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St (btwn Malcolm X/Lenox & 7th Ave) 212-222-0633 nycradicalwomen@nyct.net

#### MON NOV 3

5pm • FREE  
TALK/DISCUSSION: TONNAGE AND TOXICITY: VISIBLE & INVISIBLE SOLID WASTE PROBLEMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES. In the late 1980s, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reported that manufacturing industries generate 7.6 billion tons of solid waste a year, with mining and other industries adding another 5 billion tons. Why is there a focus on the 250 million tons of annual "municipal solid waste" while billions of industrial waste remains an afterthought? NYU's Bobst Library, Avery Rm, 2nd Fl, 70 Washington Square South • 212-998-2622 RSVP jill: tinyurl.com/salon-rsvp



HALLOWEEN RIDES  
FRI OCT 31 AND TIME'S UP!  
HALLOWEEN AFTER-PARTY.

TRUTHSERUM.ORG

## READER COMMENTS

#### THE MONEY MESS

*Response to "How to Wreck the Economy," Oct. 3:*

This is an excellent analysis that only left out one factor that changed things in November 2007. The move to Financial Accounting Standards Board Statement No. 157 (FASB 157) caused an already tightening market to assess market prices for illiquid assets simultaneously, and gave no value to assets that were income producing — such as mortgage backed securities treating them solely for sale value. This move to commoditize everything for trading has been the main problem. These derivative products have been behind all our problems, even high oil prices. I would outlaw their use in the United States rather than regulate them.

—JIM

#### THIS BAILOUT ISA SELLOUT

*Response to "The Road to Recovery," Oct. 3:*

Does the government have the will to even consider alternatives other than fi-

nancing the crooks on Wall Street? The sad part about the financial mess that we are in is that the presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain can't seem to come up with other alternatives other than bailing out the ones that got us in this mess in the first place.

—JEFFY

#### TENANTS SAVED

*Response to "Wall Street Bailout May Hammer Tenants," Oct. 3:*

In a victory for rent regulated tenants, the bailout bill that passed the U.S. House and Senate, which was signed by the President, guarantees that all subsidies and rent protections will remain in place when the Federal Government intervenes. This provision trumps RTC v. Diamond, by eliminating the danger that New York's rent regulation laws would be preempted in buildings where the U.S. Treasury buys the debt.

—EDMUND ROSNER

## OCT—NOV

#### THU NOV 13

4pm • FREE  
DEMONSTRATION: SINGLE-PAYER NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN (HR 676). Private health insurance must go! The Coalition invites you to participate in the march for National Health Insurance. In this moment of billion-dollar taxpayer "bailouts" for Corporate America, few people recognize that debts incurred as a result of medical procedures are the leading cause of personal bankruptcy. Bryant Park (42nd St & 6th Ave) phimg.org

#### THU NOV 13

7:30pm • Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15  
BOOK PARTY/FORUM: "NEW YORK FOR SALE: COMMUNITY PLANNING CONFRONTS GLOBAL REAL ESTATE." Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development director and author Tom Angotti tells some of the stories of community planning in New York City: how activists moved beyond simple protests and began to formulate community plans to protect neighborhoods against urban renewal, real estate mega-projects, gentrification, and environmental hazards. The Brecht Forum, 451 West St 212-242-4201 brechtforum.org

#### SAT NOV 15

4pm • FREE  
FILM: RESISTANCE AND REVOLT IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA. Join the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture as they celebrate the U.S. abolition of the transatlantic slave trade bicentennial with the film, "Time and Judgment: A Diary of 400 Year Exile." Langston Hughes Auditorium, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Blvd 212-491-2252 • schomburgcenter.org

**NEXT ISSUE: NOVEMBER 14**

E-MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO LETTERS@INDYPENDENT.ORG OR COMMENT ON INDYPENDENT.ORG





# ‘Obscene Monument to War’ Returns to NYC



**FLOATING PROPAGANDA:** A small crowd of peace activists protested the return of the U.S.S. *Intrepid* Navy warship museum to Manhattan’s westside Pier 86 Oct. 2. The ship and pier had undergone an extensive renovation, with much of the \$120 million dollar bill footed by taxpayers. Protestors plan to demonstrate the reopening of the museum Nov. 8. PHOTO: BRYAN FARRELL

By ERIC STONER

While hundreds gathered to welcome the return of the U.S.S. *Intrepid* to its west Manhattan pier Oct. 2, not everyone present was there to celebrate. More than a dozen peace activists carried banners and handed out fliers along the waterfront to protest what one demonstrator called “an obscene monument to war.”

The *Intrepid*, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, set sail in 1943 during World War II, and was deployed during the Korean and Vietnam wars. In the 1960s, it was used as a support vessel in two NASA space missions. Decommissioned in 1974 after years of service, the ship has served as a military and space museum at Pier 86 since 1982.

Nearly two years ago, the warship was hauled to Bayonne, N.J., and then to Staten Island for extensive repairs and renovation.

## Antiwar Vets Injured, Arrested

By ALEX KANE

Ten members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), a group of military veterans calling for immediate troop withdrawal from Iraq, were arrested outside Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, Oct. 15 in a protest before the final presidential debate. Nassau County police also apprehended five civilians supporting IVAW’s actions.

“Our goal is to make Iraq and veterans the forefront of the debate,” said former U.S. Army Sergeant Kristofer Goldsmith, an IVAW member who served in Iraq in 2005.

As nearly 400 antiwar demonstrators tried to get close to the Hofstra campus two hours before the debate was to begin, riot police and officers mounted on horseback charged people standing on the sidewalk, too. “The horses were pushing, like really pushing, against [members of IVAW] and physically touching their bodies,” said Erika Ward, an New York University student and intern at the TV/radio news program *Democracy Now!*

One victim was a former U.S. Army sergeant Nick Morgan who served in Iraq from 2004 to 2005. Witnesses say that a horse stepped on his face, causing him to suffer a fractured cheekbone. A gash was visible on the side of his face, with blood dripping onto the pavement. Morgan was arrested, and only taken to a hospital after fellow IVAW members insisted to the police that he was exhibiting signs of a concussion. At the hospital, according to IVAW member Matthis Chiroux, Morgan was only given Motrin, then brought to the police station. Chiroux said that members of the Nassau County police department sexually harassed the women who were arrested, including IVAW member Marlisa Grogan. Chir-

oux also noted that the prison officers mocked the veterans and threatened them with prison rape.

The protest had begun slowly hours earlier in the afternoon with about 70 antiwar activists rallying at a parking lot near the Hempstead train station.

“We have a blind media [and] deaf candidates, but [IVAW] has a voice that will be heard,” said former U.S. Marine Corps Corporal and IVAW member James Gilligan.

As more activists from the New York City area poured in, the march to the Hofstra campus began with defiant chants of, “Stop the torture, stop the war, this is what we’re fighting for,” and “They’re our brothers, they’re our sisters, we support war resisters!” filling the streets of Hempstead.

The troops have “been promised so much ... it’s important for IVAW to have a voice,” said Chelsea Florio, a member of the Fordham Anti-War Coalition.

IVAW members, backed by a crowd of antiwar protesters, were allowed to pass through one line of police before they were met with lines of Nassau County riot police and officers on horses who would not allow the veterans to enter the Hofstra campus. IVAW members Chiroux and Goldsmith, who organized the protest, attempted to get into the university first and were promptly arrested. At least three other veterans and four civilians followed and were arrested as well.

The arrests seemed to energize the crowd, and as they chanted, “Let them in,” it looked as if things could easily get out of hand. The mounted police pushed against the crowd, which was led by a group of about 15 Iraq veterans, until the demonstrators had been moved onto a nearby sidewalk.

After a tense standoff for five minutes, approximately four people were knocked over by riot police and horses. It was during this fracas that more arrests were made and Morgan was injured.

In early October, Chiroux, who last May publicly declared his intent to refuse to deploy

to Iraq, sent a letter to CBS presidential debate moderator Bob Scheiffer spelling out IVAW’s demands. Chiroux’s letter demanded that two members of IVAW, himself and Goldsmith, be allowed entry into the debate to ask Senators Barack Obama and John McCain one question each. Neither CBS nor Schieffer responded to the letter.

Before getting arrested, Chiroux and Goldsmith announced to the crowd what they each had planned on asking the candidates. Chiroux had this question for Obama: “Are you prepared to back up your own words and the U.S. Constitution by supporting service members refusing to participate in what you describe as an illegal occupation?”

Goldsmith’s question was addressed to McCain: “What promises are you willing to make ... to prove that you will ensure the V.A. is fully funded, staffed and capable of preventing troops from suffering as they are now?”

*For the full article, see [independent.org](http://independent.org).*



PHOTO: JAMIE LEHANE

IVAW member Matthis Chiroux Oct. 15.

in America’s many wars.

“They talk about it as being educational,” said longtime member of the War Resisters League, Ed Hedemann, “but really it’s a glorification of war and a recruitment tool to get young people interested in the military.”

On his most recent visit to the *Intrepid*, Daloisio went on a ride that simulated a bombing run over a country specified as Iraq. He was later asked to leave, after politely inquiring about the civilian death toll from the bombs on the planes that were being described during a tour. “There is no mention whatsoever of the victims of war,” Daloisio said.

“It’s not simply a museum, it’s a warship that takes taxpayer money and uses it to put out propaganda to children that war is something that is not only acceptable, but entertaining and fun,” Daloisio said, who brought his 16-month old baby to the protest.

So what should be done with the *Intrepid*? One protestor who served in the Navy thought it should be used for scrap metal, while others thought it could serve a more useful function. “The best thing that could be done with the *Intrepid*,” Hedemann said, “would be to convert it into a peace museum showing the horrors of war rather than glorifying the battles that it has been in and people that have been killed.”

*The next protest at the Intrepid will be held at 11am on Nov. 8, when the museum will officially reopen its doors to the public. The Intrepid Museum is located at Pier 86, Twelfth Avenue and West 46th Street.*

## FORECLOSURE FIGHT



**RETURNING HOME:** Queens resident Jocelyne Voltaire joined members of the peace action group CODEPINK in an Oct. 17 rally at the Queens County Courthouse to save her home from auction. As a result of a predatory loan, Voltaire’s house was foreclosed and set to be put on the auction block. Voltaire, a mother of four, suffered the loss of her eldest son who was serving with the U.S. Marine Corp in the Middle East. Minutes before the auction was to take place, CODEPINK was able to help raise \$30,000 in order to save her home.

PHOTO AND TEXT BY JAMIE LEHANE



# CITY CARVES UP E. 125TH ST. FOR DEVELOPERS

## “We were absolutely bypassed in this process,” says one community leader.

BY JENNIFER JANISCH

Seven-and-a-half acres of East Harlem have become the latest battleground between local residents and city officials over gentrification of Harlem’s main street.

The City Council cleared the way Oct. 7 for the 1.7-million-square-foot East Harlem Media, Entertainment and Cultural Center, which will be located between East 125th and East 127th Streets, from Second to Third Avenues. The \$700 million complex will include office and retail space, open-air space, a hotel, a cultural center and 800 apartment units.

But some Harlemites are charging that city officials who okayed the mega-project are ignoring the needs and wants of the neighborhood and participating in a murky community engagement process.

“The EDC [sic] [Empire State Development Corporation] doesn’t care about the culture of the area,” says Evan Blum, who owns the Schmuck Brothers of Pennsylvania antique store at 205 E. 125th Street. “They don’t know how to cultivate it to make it benefit the community.”

ESDC officials at a town hall meeting one week before the Oct. 7 vote said they were in contact with all business owners who would be affected by the development.

But Blum says he has not been approached by the ESDC and believes the city intends to invoke eminent domain.

“The EDC [sic] has been deceptive and dishonest,” he says. “I’m disgusted by these characters. You work hard, you pay your taxes, and then they use that money to throw you out.”

Eighteen locally-owned businesses and seven property owners would be displaced by

the project. Damon Bae, owner of the Fancy Cleaners dry cleaning business at 2319 Third Avenue, says the ESDC approached him with a conditional offer for his property.

“It was largely insufficient,” he says, declining to comment on the precise amount of the offer.

Due to community protests, Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito — whose district includes East Harlem — formed the East 125th Street Task Force two years ago to foster a dialogue between the City and the community about the proposed project.

But Miriam Falcon-Lopez of the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle says her organization — which has overseen all East Harlem developments for the last 45 years through an agreement with the City of New York — was forced out of the task force negotiations for not agreeing with the process and plans for the development project.

“Community Board 11 and the ESDC were force-feeding us their agenda by providing us with documents and designs that were already in place,” she says. “We were absolutely bypassed in this process.”

Falcon-Lopez said she was also concerned by the task force’s unwillingness to create a community benefits agreement (CBA). A CBA would specify the benefits the developer will provide to the community in exchange for its support of the project.

Instead, the task force included various points of agreement regarding community benefits in its draft contract with the developer. But there was one problem: the names of the prospective developers were kept secret, provoking residents to wonder how the community’s needs could be secured if there was no developer to negotiate with directly.

A development team was eventually decided upon around the time of the Oct. 7 vote, but not revealed to the community until after the City Council votes were cast.

City officials defended the process, citing the East Harlem 125th Street Task Force as evidence of a rare dialogue between the City and its residents, even calling it a precedent for future projects.

However, there is a chance the project might not go forward, at least not anytime soon; the City has selected a developer that is at risk of becoming another casualty of the global credit crisis.

General Growth Properties — the largest of the seven development partners chosen to implement the East 125th Street project — has lost 90 percent of its share price since the

beginning of the year, and there are worries that aspects of the project such as affordable housing might be cut from the project if credit and capital are scarce. The company has recently postponed \$1.1 billion worth of similar projects, according to Green Street Advisors, a research company in California.

Mark-Viverito voted for the project in the City Council Oct. 7 after holding two town hall meetings in East Harlem on Sept. 25 and Oct. 2 in which outraged members of the community expressed their disapproval of the project and accused her of forgetting who voted her into office.

“The community’s voice has been heard in this project,” Mark-Viverito said afterwards in a phone interview with the *Independent*.



**DIRTY POLITICS:** Damon Bae, owner of the Fancy Cleaner dry cleaning business at 2319 Third Ave., does not want to be forced to sell his property as the city goes forward with a 1.7-million-square-foot redevelopment plan for the area around his store. PHOTO: JAMIE LEHANE

# Taking On Rangel

## Underdog Candidate Challenges Goodtime Charlie

BY JAISAL NOOR

Earlier this year, Craig Schley was helping organize community opposition to the rezoning of the 125th Street corridor, a pet project of Rep. Charlie Rangel. Now, Schley finds himself running an underdog independent campaign against Rangel, the 19-term Democratic incumbent from Harlem who has helped generate a wave of gentrification and mega-development projects in his district.

“I believe in maintaining the integrity of the community and culture by developing and building low-income housing so you secure a workforce that will sustain the type of businesses making money off its culture,” says the 45-year-old Schley. A former firefighter and model with a degree in political science, Schley describes himself as “a blue-collar man with a white-collar education.”

Running under the banner of the “Voices of the Everyday People for Change Party” that he founded, Schley gathered 6,000 signatures, nearly twice the 3,500 needed to secure a spot on the ballot. He has a volunteer staff of 10 and appears almost daily at senior centers, bookstores, churches and anywhere else he can find an audience.

Schley’s campaign has raised about \$13,000 this election cycle while the watchdog website opensecrets.org reports that Rangel has amassed \$4.82 million from his perch as chairman of the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, which writes all federal tax legislation.

Rangel, the fourth-longest serving Democrat in Congress, has been dogged by scandals this year, including the discovery that he had failed to report taxable income from a villa he owns in the Dominican Republic to that he was living in four rent-stabilized apartments in Manhattan. Rangel is currently the subject of a U.S. House Ethics Committee investigation. His close ties to the real estate industry have exasperated many constituents desperate for affordable housing, while his outspoken support for Hillary Clinton in her primary race against Barack Obama has stirred talk that Rangel is out of touch with the community.

“I think Rangel is not effective anymore in this community,” says Marietta Ford, a 23-year resident of Harlem. “He has been there for 40 years, and I’ve seen the gentrification of Harlem, there’s no affordable housing anymore. People don’t have jobs,” she says. “I think he doesn’t represent the people of the district anymore ... I am one of the people who are fed up.”

“I go door to door to let people know they shouldn’t vote for Rangel anymore,” says Carolyn Noel, a Harlem resident for more than 50 years. She added “[Schley] is a viable candidate and we’re behind him 100 percent.”

The 15th Congressional District stretches from the Upper West Side to Washington Heights/Inwood and includes Rikers Island and a part of northwestern Queens. While Rangel remains confident, his support of free-trade deals has also stirred opposition. Critics



**WORKING THE CROWD:** Craig Schley meets with Harlem residents near Mount Olive Baptist Church at 120th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard earlier this year as he campaigns for the 15th District Congressional seat. PHOTO: JIM CARROLL

say pacts like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) have helped send tens of thousands of high-paying manufacturing jobs from New York State to low-wage nations in the Global South.

New York State has lost some 200,000 manufacturing jobs since 2000, and according to analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, New York could potentially lose another million to off-shoring.

“The continued outsourcing of New York jobs is not inevitable,” says Mark Bergen, director of the New York Citizens Trade Coali-

tion. “Failed trade policies like NAFTA give expansive protections to U.S. firms that ship investment and jobs offshore. If we change our trade policy, we can change the future and keep jobs in the state rather than shipping them overseas.”

“I am against NAFTA and CAFTA and what it stands for: imbalanced trade and the loss of jobs,” Schley says. “One is unable to discuss trade without labor rights and these international trade agreements erode rights.”

For more, see [craigschley.com](http://craigschley.com).



FIRST PERSON



JENNIFER LEW

# Waiter Woes Hit Tipping Point

By Chris Cascarano

Probably the worst thing about waiting tables is relying on other people’s generosity for a living, especially during a financial crisis.

As a waiter in the Upper West Side, I’ve seen a flourishing boutique restaurant become deserted, and my personal bottom line plummet like the Dow Jones Industrial Average in only a matter of weeks.

As the financial crisis goes from bad to worse, I find myself wondering, along with my coworkers, Wall Street and “Main Street” — how much worse will the economy get and what am I going to do?

When I started at the restaurant in March 2008, during a now eclipsed slumping economy, 20 percent of the customer’s bill was the standard tip. In a week, I could expect about \$500 dollars for working five or six 7-hour shifts.

Those times are gone.

Business began to ebb in June with the summer heat. I thought it was a fluke at first and used the spare time in the restaurant to read, relax and watch baseball on the big-screen TV. Since then, I’ve become worried, and now broke.

Customers come in so infrequently that we sit alone in the dining room for hours at a time; at time of the usual dinner rush only a few tables are filled, and the guests who do come spend far less than they did three months ago.

The 20 percent tip is long gone as well. Many of the tips are just rounded to the nearest even dollar (on a \$74.50 check, the customer will just write \$80 as a total).

Recently, I worked 39 hours in a week and made \$270. The restaurant, as well, is no longer earning money — a complete change from the restaurant that once had a wait-list on any given day of the week.

To make up the difference, the owners laid off some of the staff. In about two weeks, several managers, busboys, porters and kitchen workers were gone. Each day, about five or six recently unemployed waiters and busboys come in looking for work.

The situation at my restaurant is not unique. More than 165,000 people work in the city’s restaurant industry. Along Columbus Avenue, where my workplace is located, other casual dining venues are as empty as mine. Friends who work in fine dining restaurants say that business has slumped. Friends who work at high-end bars say business isn’t even close to what it used to be when finance companies would buy out the bar for thousands of dollars on Friday nights.

Nationwide, restaurant business analysts are calling this the biggest recession in the industry since 1991. Food service consultancy firm Technomic recently revised its 2008 forecast, decreasing the expected growth rate from 5.1 to 3.6 percent.

According to NPD Group, a company that monitors consumer activity, the restaurant industry has seen less traffic for several years; however, it saw actual sales decline for the first time in two and a half years the week of July 28. Worst hit, they said, were independent restaurants like mine.

It’s frightful news for someone like myself who is barely able to pay his monthly bills, which are still far lower than most people I know. I wonder when it will be my time to find a second job, move in with my parents or have to decide which bill I will not pay.

Insurance? I have none. And job security? I signed that away when I was hired with an “at-will employment agreement” that means I can be fired or laid off for any reason.

It’s the same fear I detect in our customers. There are businessmen who come in late at night or early in the morning before work to confide their worries to coworkers. Their conversations, which I listen in on by hovering near the table, are about what is going to happen to their department, where to safely stash their money, and, like everyone, when the economy is going to turn around.

The middle-aged, life-long bartender at the restaurant says that business will come back, and that people are just in shock. As the saying goes, “liquor is recession-proof.” He may be speaking only for himself, but I sure hope the diners come back too and spend like they did before.

**Insurance? I have none. And job security? I signed that away when I was hired with an “at will employment agreement.”**



## PERFORMING ARTS AT THE BRECHT FORUM

**OCTOBER 30 TO NOV. 2** Queer Black Film Festival

**NOV 1** Neues Kabarett Presents Connie Crothers

**NOV 3** Exile/Migration/Desire Book Party with Amitav Ghosh

**NOV 7** Common Threads: Retail Action Project Art Show

**NOV 9** Afro-Latino Cafe

**NOV 15 – 17** Ollin Imagination Presents:  
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9am, Mon-Fri

**Bronxnet Channel 67**  
9am, Tues & Thurs

**SATELLITE TV**  
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**DISH Network Channel 9415**  
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**Link TV**  
**DISH Network Channel 9410 / DirecTV Channel 375**  
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# “They Need It More Than I Do”

## Despite Crashing U.S. Economy, NYC Haitians Increase Giving to Their Hurricane-Battered Homeland

By JONAH ENGLE

As Wall Street experiences a financial catastrophe and thousands of New Yorkers worry about the economic fallout, the city’s Haitian community remains focused on a disaster of a different kind. Haiti has been hit by three hurricanes and a tropical storm in a span of three weeks. That has left Haitians in New York, already struggling in a worsening economy, scrambling to help relatives back home.

New York City resident Pierre Zamor, a Haitian native who lost his construction job six months ago, says he is picking up odd jobs trying to both make enough money to survive in the city and send money back home.

“I send food, but it’s not enough. It’s hard for me too,” Zamor says while sitting at a popular coffee shop on Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn with fellow Haitian construction workers talking about the problems facing Haiti. Without a steady job, he’s just getting by. “One day you have, one day you don’t,” he says.

Despite the difficult economic times,



**DIGGING DEEP:** Gharnot, a Haitian immigrant who works as a registered nurse, waits in line at Unitransfer, a money transfer station located at 2728 Church Ave. in Flatbush, Brooklyn. He says he has been hurt by the economic crisis, but sends home what he can to help his family in Haiti. PHOTO: JAMIE LEHANE AND SARAH SECUNDA

Haitians say they feel a sense of duty to help those in greater need. The storms killed approximately 800 people and left 800,000 homeless in a nation of nine million.

City Councilman Mathieu Eugene, who helped organize a food and clothing drive for victims of the hurricanes, recognizes that Haitians in New York have been hard hit by the faltering economy. “Haitians want to realize the American Dream,” he says, however, “a lot, a lot of Haitian homeowners are going into foreclosure.”

At the best of times, Haitians depend on the generosity of relatives overseas who sent back \$1.65 billion in 2006, according to a study commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank. That’s equivalent to 35 percent of Haiti’s gross national product. These transfers are a lifeline for Haiti’s nine million people who the United Nations estimates mostly live on less than \$2 a day. Earlier this year, riots brought on by food shortages forced the resignation of Prime Minister Jacques-Édouard Alexis.

More than \$1 billion of the annual remittances come from Haitians in the United States. At the corner of Church Avenue and Lloyd Street in Flatbush — which is home to the city’s largest Haitian community — three remittance stores with signs in Haitian Creole promise speed and reliability.

On a recent weekday in October, a steady stream of people made their way on foot and by car to line up at the counters of those three stores — CAM, Unitransfer and Soca Transfer — to send help to loved ones in need. As the day progressed, the lines grew as people came from their jobs.

Yollette (who wouldn’t give her last name), walked out of Unitransfer with her two daughters, holding a receipt for the \$150 in cash and the rice she had arranged to be sent to Haiti. Yollette said that she and the other customers had just been talking about their fears that too often donations sent to Haiti are stolen by crooked officials.

Sending money and supplies through money transfer stores, she said, was one way to avoid that. Yollette was taking no chances, she had arranged for a friend, a police officer in the capital, Port-au-Prince, to pick up the food and money and deliver it to people in Gonaives. The town of 300,000, which experienced the worst of the flooding, has been devastated.

People who work at the money transfer stores say donations have increased since the hurricanes started battering Haiti in August, despite the declining economic fortunes of many Haitians in the city.

“They are getting calls from family,” said William Regis, manager of Soca Transfer. “Every week they compromise themselves. Instead of sending once a month, they are sending two or three times a month, even if it’s just a little more.”

For Pierre-Joseph Cadet, a construction worker with two children in college, the logic is simple.

“I cut my budget,” he says, “I spend less here, so I can send as much as I can. They need it more than I do.”

# Galveston Pushes Gentrification by Hurricane

By RACHEL CLARKE AND KATIE HEIM  
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

GALVESTON, Texas — Charles Early runs an Internet bookstore from his apartment on the west end of Galveston Island. After Hurricane Ike came ashore Sept. 13 with 110 mph winds and an 11-foot storm surge, Early, like so many other frustrated Galveston residents, wanted to go home to begin picking up the pieces and assessing damages. Texas officials had closed the island to residents indefinitely, which was creating a huge burden for Early and others.

“Those people who are really being hurt the most are the people who can least afford,” he said. “If you are poor and you’re renting a place, all your stuff is being ruined while you are waiting for the mayor to let you on.”

From the moment Galveston Island was closed, access to the island was entirely dependent on who you were and who you knew. Prominent business owners, public officials and well-known families were permitted on the island to assess damage and begin rebuilding. Private contractors poured in while average homeowners were barred from entry even as the threat of toxic mold over-running their homes grew daily. Less than a week after the storm, the city looked like a ghost town in all residential areas while the epicenter of the tourist industry was abuzz with private contractors.

Residents lacking the prominence or political connections to return earlier finally came home Sept. 24, 11 days after Ike devastated the small island city of 57,000 people. Galveston city officials wasted no time implementing a Katrina-like gentrification policy. Most of the residents of Galveston’s 975 units of public housing were ordered to vacate their homes and have their belongings cleared out by Sept. 26.

Many disabled and elderly residents hit public housing employees with a barrage of questions: Where am I supposed to live? How long do I have to get my things out? Where is FEMA? Where is the housing authority? Are they going to tear this place down? Questions that were met with deafening silence. With shelters and hotels full for hundreds of miles, a tent city sprouted outside a local elementary school.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are offering displaced public housing residents an 18-month rental assistance program that is slated to begin Nov. 1. However, it is uncertain where they will end up as surrounding counties are already inundated with hurricane victims seeking affordable housing. Like New Orleans three years prior, poorer residents are finding little to come home to.

Homeowners are being encouraged to apply for assistance through FEMA. Uninsured and under-insured residents can recover up to 50 percent of the value of their losses from the storm if their application is approved by a privately-contracted FEMA inspector. Resident’s who are not satisfied with the agency’s ruling will have to hire an outside contractor to assess damages to their homes.

### BUSH-CLINTON CHARITY

President George W. Bush, Jr. toured the island Oct. 14, with former Presidents Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush Sr., giving a press conference outside of the one of the island’s most monied and prominent subdivisions. In a scene eerily reminiscent of New Orleans, Bush Jr. congratulated public officials and formally announced the creation of the Bush-Clinton Coastal Recovery Fund. Former U.S. Secretary of State and longtime Bush family friend James Baker was selected to head fund-raising efforts.

Bush Jr. and Bush Sr. posed for photo ops on the island stressing the need to rebuild Galveston’s tourist beaches and prevent future beach erosion.

Just as the French Quarter is booming while New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward lays in ruins a few miles away, Galveston residents are now forced to watch the same “business as usual” facade being erected in their coastal home. On its official website, the City of Galveston boasts of a number of upcoming events and tourist attractions including a business expo, cemetery tours, a Beach Boys concert and plenty to do just in time for the winter season.

One is left to wonder when the tours of the ravaged parts of the city will begin.

Like in New Orleans three years prior, Galveston’s poorer residents are finding little to come home to.

# Bailing Out Bankrupt Ideology



BY ARUN GUPTA

Don't believe the financial press when it says the Department of the Treasury "quietly nationalized much of the U.S. banking system" on Oct. 14. And don't believe anyone administered last rites to capitalism or neoliberalism.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's plan is not only highway robbery, it shows that capital is profiting off the disaster it helped create and government is still relying on the bankrupt ideology of self-regulating markets to solve the problem.

John Kanas, former CEO of North Fork Bancorp, summed up the plan as "a pretty good deal for the recipients and probably a pretty tough deal for taxpayers." He added, "It seems quite explicit that there's no strings attached to this money .... It seems like a gift."

The Paulson plan offers little public ownership other than absorbing the banks' losses. It may seem to be a nationalization because the Treasury is injecting capital in banks for equity stakes, instead of the original plan of buying only toxic mortgage-backed securities. But don't cry for the banks. The *New York Times* noted the first phase of the plan will "provide \$125 billion to nine banks on terms that were more favorable than they would have received in the marketplace."

When the chiefs of the nine banks met with the Treasury on Oct. 13 they were told

they "would pay a relatively modest 5 percent in annual dividend payments" to the U.S. government. In contrast, on Sept. 23 Warren Buffet announced he would invest \$5 billion investment in Goldman Sachs, for which he received a 10 percent dividend.

The Treasury will buy "preferred shares" that have no voting rights, so it will have no real say in the institutions. This is opposed to the British plan to partially nationalize their banks, which involves buying preferred and common shares. The Treasury's decision not to demand common shares effectively protects shareholders by propping up the stock prices of financial firms, rather than making them take a hit, as happened to the shareholders of British banks.

Paulson was unabashed about this lopsided deal when he introduced the plan on Oct. 14, saying, "We're not looking to come in and take meaningful ownership percentages."

A different deal, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group's \$9 billion investment in Morgan Stanley, reveals how the plan was rigged from the start. The Mitsubishi buy-in was being negotiated right before the unveiling of the Treasury plan, which included injecting \$10 billion into Morgan Stanley. At that point Morgan Stanley's stock was in a tailspin. Afraid that Mitsubishi would walk away, the venerable Wall Street bank renegotiated the deal after "federal officials assured Mitsubishi that its investment [in Morgan Stanley] would be protected."

Thus, the bailout appears designed to protect large investors like Mitsubishi and Buffet. Or as the *Wall Street Journal* put it, "To make sure private investors aren't scared away," the Treasury structured "its investment on terms favorable to the banks."

**LACK OF CONTROL**

While some sort of government intervention was necessary to revive the credit sector, the Paulson plan is of dubious value. From a lack of controls over how banks will use the bailout funds to ineffective limits on executive compensation to a scaling back of investigations of Wall Street fraud, the operating principle of the bailout is to let the markets self-regulate.

Moreover, the Paulson plan fits into the neoliberal practice of private profit at public expense. Financial firms will profit both from the bailout itself and by getting paid fees to manage the taxpayer funds used to bail out banks.

In another favor to U.S. banks, they can keep paying dividends while the British plan mandates that "banks can't pay shareholder dividends until they repay the preferred shares they are issuing to the government," according to the *Journal*. So U.S. banks could use taxpayer money to pay shareholders instead of shoring up credit markets.

This lack of control over the bailout money may be the plan's fatal flaw: The government "has offered no written requirements about how or when the banks must use the money."

Former North Fork Bancorp CEO Kanas, said, "Banks are likely to use the government capital to retire outstanding debt that pays a higher yield than the 5 percent on the government's preferred shares." This will boost their profits while doing little for the overall economy. The banks could also use the money "to acquire weaker competitors ... avoid painful cost-cutting" or just "sit on the capital."

In one of the greatest absurdities, the banks that spawned much of this economic disaster will profit from managing the \$700 billion bailout fund. Take the Bank of New York Mellon. It has been named the "master custodian firm" to manage the inflow and outflow of the fund, which is described as a "potentially lucrative assignment." The Bank of New York Mellon is one of the first recipients of the capital infusion, having received \$3 billion. Presumably, then, it will make money by managing the money that's being used to bail it out.

Other banks are lining up at the trough. With "\$700 billion to disburse," reported the *New York Times*, "the plan could still generate tens of billions of dollars in fees if the firms negotiate anywhere close to their standard fees."

And never mind talk about cutting the cords off golden parachutes and pinching executive pay. Neel Kashkari, a former Goldman Sachs executive handpicked by Paulson to manage the \$700 billion fund from the Treasury side, told the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association the night before the U.S. House of Representatives rejected the first bailout bill that the restrictions would be "a pretty modest hindrance."

This was no idle comment. Of the four provisions to crimp lavish payouts for senior executives, the only one with teeth is a ban on new golden parachutes (already existing parachutes are unaffected); the other three provisions are meaningless.

And it appears criminal behavior is being rewarded. Not one Wall Street executive has been forced to resign. The FBI has opened criminal investigations into Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG and Lehman Brothers, but these are all failed firms. There is no indication any firm still standing is being probed. Even more troubling, the *Times* reported that FBI officials worry that the bailout "may itself become a problem because it contains inadequate controls to deter fraud."

The lack of controls and constraints on executive compensation are part of a broader counterattack to undermine greater domestic regulation and global oversight of the hidden markets behind the financial implosion. Neoliberalism will not go gently into the night gently. Its proponents still run the show, and perhaps they have abandoned their free-market rhetoric, but it's only to salvage the monied interests.

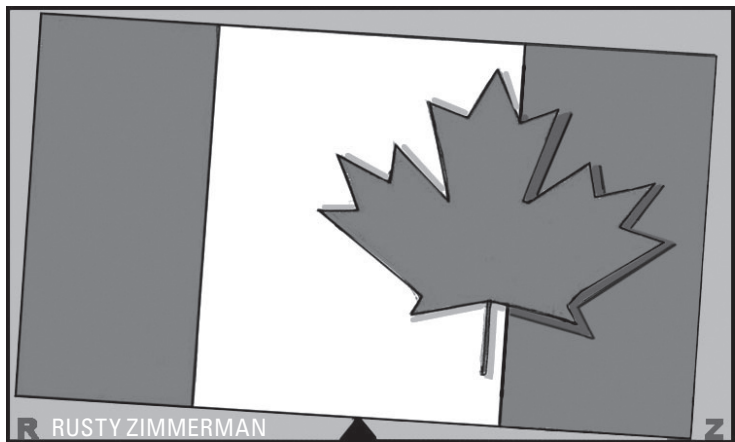
Congressional Democrats are considering modest Keynesian-style public works projects, bolstered with increased unemployment benefits, tax cuts and aid to states. As for their standard-bearer, Barack Obama, his latest speech calling for quick action was full of half-measures like bankruptcy-court adjustments for home owners, which is far less effective in supporting house prices than a new Home Owner's Loan Corporation; corporate welfare, such as loan guarantees for automakers; and conservative ideas like "eliminating all capital gains taxes on investments in small businesses and start-up companies."

Change is not going to happen because voters install a Democratic majority in Washington. It is nearly as beholden to corporate overlords and their free-market apostles as the Republicans.

*This is excerpted from a longer article. For the full article and links, see [independent.org](http://independent.org).*

## O Canada

For those of you thinking of moving control of more than 50 percent of the parliament. to Canada if John McCain wins the Harper has repeatedly downplayed his support presidential election ... not so fast. You for the Bush administration and its policies, but would be moving to a country ruled by a party his record of pushing for military involvement in similar to the Republicans. The Conservatives, led Iraq in 2003 and recently deporting U.S. Iraq War by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, strengthened resisters back to the United States speaks for their minority government in a federal election itself. For a full analysis on the Canadian election Oct. 14 and came just 12 seats short of having by Jacob Scheier, visit [independent.org](http://independent.org).







# The Rule of Impunity

**FREE FIRE ZONE** (Photos Clockwise): Paramilitaries prepare to open fire on anti-government protesters in Santa Lucía del Camino, Oaxaca, Mexico, Oct. 27, 2006. (From left to right) Juan Carlos Soriano Velasco, a municipal police officer; town official Orlando Manuel Aguilar Coello; an unidentified man; and state government official Abel Santiago Zarate. PHOTO: RAUL ESTRELLA/EL UNIVERSAL. Protesters launch a barrage of rocks and Molotov cocktails in the direction of their gun-toting assailants. Brad Will stands in the upper right hand corner of the photograph filming the action. PHOTO: JAVIER OTAOLA/EXCÉLSIOR. Protesters come to the aid of Brad as he lies in the street after being shot. He died a half-hour later en route to the hospital. Two of the people who assisted Brad were charged with his murder Oct. 16, 2008, by the Mexican government. PHOTO CREDIT: UNKNOWN. Brad plays with a child June 17, 2006. PHOTO: FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/PIRATEJENNY

Mexican prosecutors concoct bizarre indictments in death of independent journalist Brad Will.



By JOHN GIBLER

On Oct. 27, 2006, Brad Will stood on Juárez Avenue in the municipality of Santa Lucía del Camino, Oaxaca, Mexico. He was filming a violent clash between armed, civilian-clad municipal police and officials and members of the Oaxaca Peoples' Popular Assembly (APPO).

Brad, a longtime New York City activist and independent journalist, traveled to Oaxaca in early October 2006 to report on the protest movement led by the state teachers union that sought to oust Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had ruled Oaxaca with an iron fist for almost 80 years (See sidebar, page 9).

Brad stood amid the APPO protesters and other journalists, filming down the length of Juarez Avenue where armed officials were firing at the protesters. Brad was shot and fell to the ground, his camera still running, having recorded the sound of the shot that hit him. Brad was hit from straight on, just below the chest, and yet his killer does not appear in the camera frame at the moment of the gunshot. Brad died on the way to the hospital. He had been shot twice.

Two years later, on Oct. 16, 2008, the Mexican federal government arrested two members of APPO, charging Juan Manuel Martinez as the gunman and Octavio Perez with helping to cover up Brad's murder (Perez was later released on bail). Federal police were still looking for other suspected accomplices, all members of APPO who had tried to carry Brad to safety and save his life.

The arrests came after a series of human rights reports criticizing the government's investigation for failing to follow leads pointing to local officials who were widely photographed by the press shooting at APPO protesters on Oct. 27, 2006.

"It is such a coverup," said Kathy Will, Brad's mother, in a telephone interview on learning of the arrests. "It is an insult to us and to all of the groups that have tried to help with a meaningful investigation."

## LONG-RANGE SHOT

Whether Brad was shot at close or long range lies at the heart of the controversy over the gov-

ernment's investigation and the recent arrests. Local police in civilian clothing and municipal officials in Santa Lucía del Camino were filmed and photographed firing on the APPO protesters among whom Brad was standing when he was shot. The federal government however, has not investigated the involvement of the local officials.

More than a dozen protesters and press photographers surrounded Brad when he was shot. All those interviewed said that the bullets came from down the street. Moments before Brad was killed, *Milenio* newspaper photographer Oswaldo Ramirez was shot in the leg. The Mexican Office of the Federal Attorney General (PGR), however, has neither interviewed Ramirez nor investigated the shooting.

Raul Estrella, a photographer for *El Universal*, said that Pedro Carmona, a municipal official, shot at him when he noticed Estrella taking his picture shortly before Brad was killed.

"I heard the bullet whiz by my head and that's when I left," Estrella said in an interview in 2007.

The PGR has not charged Pedro Carmona with attempted murder, nor did they interview him in Brad's case.

The Mexican authorities claim that Brad's killers shot him at close range, at a distance of two meters (about six-and-a-half feet), implicating the APPO protesters themselves, rather than the gunmen located down the street.

Witnesses, independent experts and the Mexican governmental human rights group all challenge the PGR's short-range hypothesis.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) traveled to Mexico earlier this year and issued a report May 23 calling on the PGR to investigate paramilitary involvement.

On Sept. 26, the Mexican governmental National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) released a report highly critical of the government, charging that state and federal authorities violated the victim's and his family's human rights through their systematic failure to properly investigate the murder.

The recent arrests came a day before the deadline for the PGR to respond to the CNDH report.

"Take a look at Brad's last frame; there is nobody in that frame," said Kathy Will, "Two meters away? Come on! They are defying all logic and it just goes to show how corrupt they are. It wasn't a short-range shot and everybody

knows that."

The Will family and the PHR investigators both pointed out the federal government's failure to investigate 17 other murder cases during the 2006 Oaxaca conflict where witness testimony and photographic and video evidence indicate police participation in the killings.

"The involvement of civilian-clad police officers in death squads has been well documented," said Mexican journalist Diego Osorno.

The federal government colluded to cover up Ruiz Ortiz's crimes, Osorno said, to secure the PRI's support for President Felipe Calderón's contested 2006 election victory, as well as for energy reforms that include the controversial privatization of sectors of Mexico's state oil company.

Calderón's National Action Party (PAN), has traditionally been a rival of the PRI.

"Calderón has no other option," Osorno said. "He came to power very weak and that has made him beholden to more powerful groups, such as the PRI."

## BLAMING THE VICTIMS

Mexican state and federal officials have insisted since the day of the murder that one of the APPO members standing near Brad killed him — shooting him at close range in front of scores of witnesses without anyone seeing him, without leaving gun powder burns near the wound or on Brad's shirt, and without appearing in Brad's camera frame.

Brad's family retained a lawyer in Mexico and has since traveled there twice to meet with state and federal officials. The Mexican government has refused to consider the evidence provided by the family, focusing solely on the hypothesis that APPO killed Brad.

The troubled defense of the government's "APPO did it" theory began with then-Oaxaca State Attorney General Lisbeth Caña. On Nov. 15, 2006, Caña called a press conference in Oaxaca City, flipping through a PowerPoint presentation with elaborate charts and graphs all pointing to the conclusion of the disgruntled APPO shooter.

Caña's theory was that one of the APPO protesters told Brad to "stop taking pictures," while he cocked a 9mm pistol. As soon as he finished his sentence, the masked protester shot Brad. The bystanders who tried to take Brad to the hospital, the theory says, were in fact co-conspirators who drove him away from the crowd only to fire a second shot into his side.



Even at first glance, this theory is absurd. The killer could not have shot Brad straight on without appearing in the camera frame. Also, the day after Brad was killed, the national Mexican newspapers *Milenio* and *Excélsior* published photographs of bystanders carrying Brad to a car. Both gunshot wounds are clearly visible in the photographs; the two gunshot wounds were both present before Brad was driven off to the hospital.

We now know that Brad was not shot with a 9mm pistol, but with a .38-caliber revolver — a gun that does not make any cocking sound.

Brad's parents, Kathy and Hardy, and his brother Craig traveled to Oaxaca on March 21, 2007, to meet with the state government investigators. At the beginning of the meeting, one of Caña's assistants loaded a PowerPoint presentation dated Nov. 15, 2006. Hardy noticed the date and asked: "Does this mean that you haven't done anything in the past four months?"

Caña said that they had the wrong PowerPoint, apologized, and dispatched her assistant to bring the correct one. A few tense moments later the assistant returned and loaded the same PowerPoint presentation, this time dated March 21, 2007.

When Brad's family realized that they were being led through the exact same presentation that had been paraded before the press the previous November, they asked Caña to stop the PowerPoint and to share any new information she had gathered. She had none. Had she interrogated the municipal officials photographed shooting at protesters on Oct. 27, the family asked. She had not. Had she interrogated witnesses? She had not. Had she gathered ballistics information on the guns fired that day? She had not.

Infuriated, the family asked to view the case file — a right granted under Mexican law to the family members of murder victims. Caña said that they could not view the case file. Why? Because they had just that moment finished boxing it up to ship it to the federal government. Caña was requesting that the Mexican federal attorney general take over the case. With that, the meeting was over.

## THE FEDS TAKE THE CASE

The following day, Kathy, Hardy, Craig and their lawyer Miguel Angel de los Santos met for more than 12 hours with officials at the PGR office in Oaxaca. They were able to re-

view the case file (just unpacked), ask questions and submit evidence collected by their lawyer, such as the published photographs showing the presence of both gunshot wounds before Brad was driven from the scene.

The PGR officials, while assuring the family that they were more professional and impartial than the Oaxaca state investigators, refused to accept the photographic evidence, arguing that the photographs could have been tampered with.

Still, after the incompetence and insensitivity of the Oaxaca state investigators, the PGR officials' ardent assurances of their academic pedigrees and distance from local politics led the family to feel somewhat better. Perhaps now, with the PGR taking over the case, they told me at the time, the government will conduct a serious and unbiased investigation.

That was March 2007. When Kathy and Hardy returned to Mexico almost a year later, in late February 2008, they were eager to learn of the PGR's progress.

They were appalled to learn that there still had been no progress.

The federal special prosecution team investigating Brad's murder was still proceeding under the assumption that Brad was shot at close range and that he received the two shots in different locations — the two assumptions first presented as evidence by former state Attorney General Caña.

The PGR said that they would conclude their investigation and seek arrest warrants in a matter of weeks.

Through the efforts of Kathy and Hardy, a PHR team volunteered to travel to Mexico to review the investigation. De los Santos, the Will's lawyer, then obtained formal approval from the PGR for PHR to make an examination.

In addition, an expert video forensics analyst studied Brad's last tape. (Preliminary findings show a bullet streak descending across the camera frame milliseconds after the shot is heard and milliseconds before Brad cries out. The forensic video expert has told the family that a close-range shot is categorically impossible.)

In the months after the February meeting earlier this year, while the PHR experts were reviewing the evidence, the federal officials remained silent.

PHR concluded its review and sent a full report to the family and the Mexican government in late May 2008. In a May 23 press release, PHR wrote that the Mexican federal investi-

gation shows "a singular focus by Mexican authorities on a working hypothesis that the gunshots originated from Will's immediate surroundings; and a failure to investigate other instances of injuries or deaths in Oaxaca that might reveal a pattern of violence leading to the perpetrator(s)."

The Mexican authorities did not respond to the PHR report and instead began to leak stories to the Mexican press claiming that the federal investigation would soon conclude that the APPO protesters killed Brad.

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ATTACKS INVESTIGATION

The CNDH released its report the next day, concluding that the state and federal authorities involved in investigating Brad's murder "violated the fundamental rights to legality, to legal certainty, to access to justice, as well as to access to information."

The report details the blunders, omissions and acts of speculation that state and federal investigators engaged in from the day of Brad's murder up to the present. A short list includes: not inspecting the crime scene until Oct. 31, four days after the murder; not inspecting the firearms used that day or interrogating the men witnessed and photographed firing on the APPO protesters; not interrogating the two men originally held for the murder; not conducting or ordering an investigation to identify all those photographed carrying or firing guns that day; and misidentifying the .38-caliber bullets pulled from Brad's body as coming from a 9mm pistol.

This last error is of particular importance. Claiming that Brad was killed with a 9mm pistol, Caña detained and then released two men — state government official Abel Santiago Zarate and town official Orlando Manuel Aguilar Coello — during the first week of November 2006. They did not carry 9mm pistols, Caña said, but rather .38-caliber handguns.

But the CNDH analysis concludes that Brad was in fact killed with a .38-caliber handgun (PHR also confirmed that the lethal weapon was a .38-caliber handgun). Zarate and Aguilar, however, have not been detained for further questioning. The CNDH report also concludes that the fatal shot occurred at a distance of between 35 and 50 meters (about 40 to 55 yards) and that the two wounds that caused Brad's death occurred successively, separated by thousands of a second, one after the other, both at the crime scene on Juarez Avenue.

## THE ART OF IMPUNITY

In Mexico, the art of impunity most often takes the form of a kind of ritual incompetence — incompetence so pervasive and implacable that it can only be the result of decisive action, the result of tradition and practice, a truly exquisite craft.

Brad's case has become part of a now deep and horrid tradition of political murder investigations plagued with an incompetence whose function is simply to cement impunity into the cultural fabric of the law: from the massacre of hundreds of students in Mexico City 40 years ago on Oct. 2, 1968, to the ambush and murder of Triqui radio journalists Felicitas Sánchez and Teresa Merino April 7, 2008.

The experience of the Will family in their trips to Mexico and the documentation provided in the CNDH report present a level of incompetence in both the state and federal investigations that is too thorough to be accidental.

"Doctor Wiarco and Attorney General Medina Mora are either incompetent or corrupt. Well, Dr. Wiarco might be both," said Hardy Will, Brad's father, in a telephone interview. "Sometimes you have to call a spade a spade: They are covering up and obviously getting some direction from above."

John Gibler is the author of Mexico Unconquered: Chronicles of Power and Revolt, forthcoming from City Lights Books. He acted as a volunteer interpreter for the Will family in meetings with Mexican state and federal officials in 2007 and 2008. An archive of Brad Will coverage and a longer version of this article appears at [indypendent.org](http://indypendent.org).

## The Oaxaca Uprising

Oaxaca is an impoverished, mountainous state of 3.5 million people located in southern Mexico. In June 2006, its majority indigenous population rose up against the state's autocratic governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz and took over the capital city of Oaxaca de Juárez for four months. Spearheaded by the state teachers union, more than 350 organizations of workers, peasants, students, women and others united under the banner of the Oaxaca Peoples' Popular Assembly, or APPO. Their principle demands were Ruiz Ortiz's resignation and the dismantling of the state's corrupt political system. Brad Will's death would be used by the Mexican government as a pretext to send in thousands of federal police to crush APPO. Two years later, Ruiz Ortiz is still in power but the social conditions that sparked the movement that Brad gave his life to cover remain the same and are likely to produce future uprisings.

—JOHN TARLETON



## Brad Will's Journey

Brad Will was a longtime New York City activist and independent journalist. Before his death, Brad had spent years on the front lines of numerous campaigns from efforts to save squats and community gardens in the Lower East Side to engaging in "tree-sits" for weeks at a time high in the canopy of Oregon's endangered old-growth forests. Inspired by the militant, grassroots social justice movements that have flourished in recent years throughout Latin America, he first traveled to the region in 2002 and returned again and again with his video camera to chronicle and share in the struggles of the oppressed in various countries.

—J.T.



PHOTO COURTESY: THE WILL FAMILY.



# American People Betrayed by Both Parties

BY CHRIS HEDGES

It is no longer our economy but our democracy that is in peril. Financial collapses lead to political extremism. The rage bubbling up from our impoverished and disenfranchised working class, seen at John McCain rallies, presages a looming and dangerous right-wing backlash.

As the public begins to grasp the depth of the betrayal and abuse by our ruling class, as the Democratic and Republican Parties are exposed as craven tools of our corporate state, as savings accounts, college funds and retirement plans become worthless, as unemployment skyrockets and as home values go up in smoke, we must prepare for the political resurgence of a reinvigorated radical Christian right. The engine of this mass movement — as is true for all radical movements — is personal and economic despair. And despair, in an age of increasing shortages, poverty and hopelessness, will be one of our few surplus commodities.

Karl Polanyi in his book *The Great Transformation*, written in 1944, laid out the devastating consequences — the depressions, wars and totalitarianism — that grow out of a so-called self-regulated free market. He grasped that “fascism, like socialism, was rooted in a market society that refused to function.” He warned that a financial system always devolved, without heavy government control, into a gangster capitalism — and a gangster political system — which is a good description of the U.S. government under George W. Bush. Polanyi wrote that a self-regulating market, the kind bequeathed to us by Ronald Reagan, turned human beings and the natural environment into commodities, a situation that ensures the destruction of both society and the natural environment. He decried the proposition that nature and human beings are objects whose worth is determined by the market. He reminded us that a society that no longer recognizes that nature and human life have

a sacred dimension, an intrinsic worth beyond monetary value, ultimately commits collective suicide. Such societies feed on themselves until they die. Speculative excesses and growing inequality, he wrote, always destroy the foundation for a continued prosperity.

The corporate con artists and criminals who have hijacked our state and rigged our financial system still speak to us in the obscure and incomprehensible language coined by specialists at elite business schools. They use terms like securitization, de-leveraging, structured investment vehicles and credit de-

the losses incurred by these speculators are too massive. If credit markets remain in a deep freeze, corporations such as AT&T, Ford and General Motors might go bankrupt. The downward spiral could spread like a tidal wave across the country, especially since our corporate elite — including Barack Obama — seem to have no real intention of bailing out families who can no longer pay their mortgages or credit card debts.

Lenin said that the best way to destroy the capitalist system was to debauch its currency. If our financial disaster continues

\$485 million. His investors are wiped out. An economic collapse not only means the degradation of trade and commerce, food shortages, bankruptcies and unemployment; it means the systematic dynamiting of the foundations of a society.

The USA Patriot Act, the FISA Reform Act, the suspension of habeas corpus, the open use of torture in our offshore penal colonies, the stationing of a combat brigade on U.S. soil, the seas of surveillance cameras, and the brutal assaults against activists in Denver and St. Paul are converging to determine our future. Those dark forces arrayed against U.S. democracy are waiting for a moment to strike, a national crisis that will allow them in the name of national security and moral renewal to shred the Constitution. They have the tools. They will use fear, chaos, the hatred for the ruling elites and the specter of left-wing dissent and terrorism to impose draconian controls to extinguish our democracy. And while they do it they will be waving the U.S. flag, singing patriotic slogans and clutching the Christian cross. Fuld, I expect, will be one of many corporatists happy to contribute to the cause.

This is a defining moment in U.S. history. The next few weeks and months will see us stabilize and weather this crisis or descend into a terrifying dystopia. I place no hope in Obama or the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party is a pathetic example of liberal, bourgeois impotence, hypocrisy and complacency. It has been bought off. I will vote, if only as a form of protest against our corporate state and an homage to Polanyi’s brilliance, for Ralph Nader. I would like to offer hope, but it is more important to be a realist. No ethic or act of resistance is worth anything if it is not based on the real. And the real, I am afraid, does not look good.

*Chris Hedges is a former New York Times foreign correspondent. A longer version of this article originally appeared on [truthdig.org](http://truthdig.org).*



fault swaps. The reality, once you throw out their obnoxious jargon, is not hard to grasp. Banks loaned too much money to people and financial institutions that could not pay it back. These banks are now going broke. The government is frantically giving taxpayer dollars to banks so they can be solvent and again lend money. It is not working. Bank lending remains frozen. There are ominous signs that the government may not be able to hand over enough of our money because

there will be a widespread loss of faith in the mechanisms that regulate society. If our money becomes worthless, so does our government. All traditional standards and beliefs are shattered in a severe economic crisis. The moral order is turned upside down. The honest and industrious are wiped out while the gangsters, profiteers and speculators amass millions. Look at Lehman Brothers CEO Richard Fuld. He walks away from his bankrupt investment house after pocketing

## Third Party – An Alternative Vote

BY ALEX KANE

When New York voters step into the booth Nov. 4 to cast their ballots, there will be five presidential candidates to choose from who are not from the Democratic or Republican tickets. Each campaign, when compared to Barack Obama and John McCain, offers radically different visions for the future of the United States.



### INDEPENDENT PARTY

Ralph Nader is a four-time presidential candidate who has built his career advocating consumer rights and railing against undue corporate influence on Washington politics. His running mate, Matt Gonzalez, is a civil rights lawyer and former member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors who was instrumental in changing election laws and raising the minimum wage in San Francisco. According to campaign spokesperson Toby Heaps, the Nader campaign is pushing for a “tectonic shift” in the U.S. democratic landscape. “What [Nader] is trying to do is to bring power back to all people in the land from a small number of private commercial interests that now carry disproportionate power and control over people’s lives,” Heaps says. The Nader/Gonzalez ticket is on the ballot nationwide in 45 states, according to their campaign. *For more information, visit [votenader.org](http://votenader.org).*



### SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Róger Calero, a Nicaraguan-born Bronx resident, is a two-time presidential candidate on the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) ticket. According to his campaign director Dan Fein, current law dictates that Calero is eligible to run for president, but not serve as president, due to his being born out of the country. Calero is a workers’ rights activist and staff writer for the SWP weekly, *The Militant*, and his running mate Alyson Kennedy is a veteran civil rights activist and union organizer. Billing themselves as the “working-class alternative in the 2008 elections,” their platform is focused on bringing socialism to the United States. Fein says the SWP is on the ballot in 10 states. *For more information, visit [themilitant.com](http://themilitant.com).*



# Voting is a Cop-out

By Eric Stoner

After cutting through the hype, are presidential elections really worth the enormous amount of attention, energy and money they consume? The idea that pulling a lever every few years is actually going to bring about real change is delusional. How exactly is this supposed to happen, when the corporate media, special-interest lobbyists and wealthy campaign contributors filter out any candidate who may rock the boat long before the public is ever asked for its opinion? Just look at what has become of Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader, and Democratic contenders Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and John Edwards, for challenging the status quo. Despite espousing views on numerous issues that polls show are far more in line with public sentiment than either major party candidate, they are branded as out of touch. The media ridicules — or simply excludes and ignores — them until they are forgotten. In contrast, Barack Obama has made it clear that he would not ruffle feathers. To take just one example of his orthodoxy, when asked Sept. 7 on ABC’s “This Week” which issues he would break with his own Democratic party on, he replied, “I’ve said that we need to increase the size of our military.” His stance is not even in line with public opinion, as a recent poll showed that 43 percent of Americans thought we spent “too much” on the military, while only 20 percent said “too little.” Thus, while the predictable drama around the nefarious schemes used to exclude voters unfolds, few note that the system was effectively rigged from the start. No matter who wins, a friend of the powerful wealthy and corporate interests who actually run this country will be installed in the White House. And everyday folks will once again be fleeced by an election — and a political system — that remains little more than theater.

So, if not voting, then what? Hinting at the answer to this conundrum, Henry David Thoreau wrote in Civil Disobedience: “Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority.” Unfortunately for most Americans, voting constitutes their sole act of civil engagement. This is a complete cop-out. By voting only once every four years, people put hope in someone else to bring about “change” that, in reality, only the people themselves can make happen through continuous organizing, direct action and personal sacrifice. The existential threats that humanity must confront today will not be stopped with just a vote. If we are to have any “hope” of salvaging the world for future generations, we must put our bodies on the line and radically change the way we live. Perhaps we could learn what such a life might look like from Ammon Hennacy, the steadfast anarchist, pacifist and member of the Catholic Worker. Despite abstaining from elections, Ammon saw his body as his ballot. “Cast that body ballot on behalf of the people around you every day of your life, every day,” he argued. “And don’t let anybody ever tell you you haven’t voted.”

# Why Voting Matters

By John Tarleton

Do presidential elections matter? You betcha! Each person’s vote is infinitesimally small so we should not fool ourselves into thinking that voting is the most important thing we can do to change the world. And yes, the two-year long media circus that builds up around the campaign is an energy suck that is best avoided. However, wishing away the ambiguous world of electoral politics does not change the fact that election outcomes often do make a difference. Why? Because the people who end up controlling the levers of political power have extraordinary leverage in shaping the world we live in and even small difference in whose at the top can make a substantial difference in the daily lives of millions from protection of the environment to the defense of a woman’s right to choose, to the ability to organize a labor union. Not having to fight some battles also makes it easier to go on the offensive to wage other ones. If we actually end up with a progressive FDR-type reformer in the White House then so much the better. For that kind of scenario to unfold, it will take a level of mass-based organizing from below and to the left that this country has not seen in decades.



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Some of the most compelling evidence that voting matters is being supplied by the Republican Party, which is using a variety of machinations to disqualify as many new voters as it can — especially students, people of color and people with low incomes — under the rubric of fighting “voter fraud.” No doubt there will be more dirty tricks on Election Day. Thinking back to the 2004 election I reported for *The Independent* from Ohio, I cannot help but recall a scene that unfolded before me at an African-American church in East Cleveland, Ohio. It was a half-hour before the polls closed and I was interviewing would-be voters who were standing in long lines that snaked their way down into the basement where people cast their ballots. They knew Ohio could determine whether George W. Bush would receive a second term and were overwhelmingly supporting his opponent, John Kerry. Just then, a young woman bolted toward the door shrieking at the top of her lungs, “I can’t take it anymore! I can’t take it anymore. I worked 15 hours today and I work 15 hours tomorrow.” She soon disappeared into the cold, rainy night while Kerry would ultimately lose Ohio by 119,000 votes and concede the election. Was the exhausted young woman’s attempt to vote misguided? Were the votes cast by the people waiting in that line and in long lines all across the country a waste of time? I don’t know, but I hope they come back this year and with millions more people at their back so we can finally put the right-wing fanatics out to pasture and open up social space for creating real change. Getting Barack Obama into the White House will not be a panacea for our problems but it is an important first step in what will be a long, long journey that includes voting but cannot end there.



## PARTY FOR SOCIALISM AND LIBERATION

Gloria La Riva was a two-time gubernatorial candidate in California on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket, is active in many social justice struggles in the United States and is the coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five. Eugene Puryear, the vice presidential candidate, is a volunteer organizer for Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER) and was also involved in the campaign to free the Jena 6. The PSL is bringing their revolutionary Marxist message and rallying cry of “people over profits” to 12 states this presidential election. “There is tremendous opportunity to revive a socialist movement in this country, to explicitly say that there is another road, an alternative besides the endless war and economic calamities that are a result of the capitalist system,” says Ben Becker, an organizer with the campaign in New York City. For more information, visit [voteptsl.org](http://voteptsl.org).



## LIBERTARIAN PARTY

Bob Barr is a former Republican Congressional representative for Georgia. Barr captured the nomination of the Libertarian Party at their convention in May. While in Congress, Barr was an avid supporter of the “war on drugs,” and voted for both the USA Patriot Act and the Iraq War Resolution. He has since recanted on all of these positions. Barr’s running mate is Wayne Root, a businessman, author and television producer. The Barr/Root ticket is calling for a dramatic shift to smaller government and a “free market” economic system. They advocate cutting spending on welfare, reducing taxes and having a “consumer-oriented” healthcare system. The Libertarian Party website says the campaign is on the ballot in 45 states. For more information, visit [bobbarr2008.com](http://bobbarr2008.com).



## GREEN PARTY

Cynthia McKinney was the first African-American congresswoman elected from Georgia. McKinney and running mate Rosa Clemente, former South Bronx resident and hip-hop activist, won the nomination at the Green Party convention in July. They are making history as the first all women-of-color presidential ticket for the Green Party. McKinney has a track record of pushing important progressive issues into the spotlight, from calling for the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq to demanding comprehensive Hurricane Katrina victim assistance. She introduced a measure in Congress for the impeachment of George W. Bush in late 2006. She advocates kick-starting a movement to “create an opposition party for this country, because right now, this country doesn’t have one. The Green Party is that opposition party,” McKinney told the *Independent* in an interview during the Democratic National Convention. The Green Party ticket is on the ballot in 32 states, according to [ballot-access.org](http://ballot-access.org). For more information, visit [votetruth08.com](http://votetruth08.com).



# Dreams from My Mother

*Dreams from My Father*  
By BARACK OBAMA  
THREE RIVERS PRESS, 1995

At a political roast, the Al Smith dinner in New York, Barack Obama joked about being “The One,” a knowing wink about the religious fervor of his fans. “Contrary to popular belief,” he said, “I was not born in a manger.”

With Wall Street in ruins, however, Obama is expected to save us. He plays the role with enough irony to deny it, but just enough pleasure so we know he feels it. Why does he enjoy promising redemption?

A clue is found in his 1995 memoir *Dreams from My Father*. Originally a medium-seller, it has now sold hundreds of thousands of copies during the presidential campaign as readers sift its pages like a Rosetta Stone for Obama.

His memoir shows a need to redeem. Redemption is the act of seeing through the degraded state of a loved one to salvage the hidden value. Which is why his memoir should be called *Dreams from My Mother* — because Obama dove into African-American culture not to create a black identity, but to redeem the one she gave him.

It was through her eyes that Obama saw black as beautiful, and it was through the white perspective in TV and magazines that he saw it degraded. She, being white, could not protect him from racism she could not see, and they grew apart. He searched black culture for a psychic refuge but could not find it until he faced the man who gave him his color, the man who abandoned him, his father.

Barack Obama Sr. had a family in Kenya when he courted Stanley Ann, a young white woman from Kansas. In a whirlwind of hunger and fascination they married and soon Obama Jr. was born. Two years later the whirlwind blew itself out. When Obama Jr. asked for his father, his mother created a mythology for her son to love in place of a man.

She woke early each day to teach him about the civil rights movement, played Mahalia Jackson records and told him that “to be black was to be the beneficiary of a great inheritance, a special destiny, glorious burdens that only we were strong enough to bear. Burdens we were to carry with style.”

However, there were threats she could not see. As a child he saw in *Life* magazine a black man

who chemically peeled his skin to be white, his face burned to a ghostly hue. Obama was terrified that a man, brown like him, would willingly destroy himself. He writes, “I went into the bathroom and stood in front of the mirror ... and wondered if there was something wrong with me.”

So began Obama’s double consciousness. This term was coined by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* to describe “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”

Obamasoughtsafety.Hismother could not shield him, and his father was absent, so he searched for it in “blackness” as a high school basketball player, then as a college activist and finally as a community organizer. He listened to old men gossip in the barbershop, women wobbling under the burden of old age and older worries, kids cursing on the corner. Obama internalized blackness because it shone like a UV light, exposing invisible racism.

But his blackness was not one he learned from black folk but the one his mother taught him with images of the civil rights movement. He

slogged through the nihilism of a broken people and marched to the last door of power as if she’d be on the other side. To do so he had to redeem the man who gave him color, the man she first loved, the man who failed him.

Obama traveled to Kenya to learn about a father who was too proud to bow before the powerful and too proud to speak of the pain when stripped of his job. His father drank himself numb and crashed his car one night, killing himself. Standing at his father’s grave Obama wept, “Oh father, there was no shame in your confusion ... There was only shame in the silence fear had produced. It was the silence that betrayed us.”

Having lived between the lies people tell, Obama knew they separate us so far from reality that we become terrified of it and will commit crimes to keep it at bay. His father had lost his life to such



lies. By writing his father’s story, a story Obama Sr. was unable to tell, Obama the son redeemed him. It is this need to redeem, to pay off the debt of those silenced by shame, that drives him.

—NICHOLAS POWERS

# Local Projects Lure Workers Away from System DIY TRUMPS THE VOTE

*Nowtopia*  
By CHRIS CARLSSON  
AK PRESS, 2008

*Toolbox for Sustainable City Living*  
By SCOTT KELLOGG AND STACY PETTIGREW  
SOUTH END PRESS, 2008

Every four years, activism in the United States is co-opted and channeled into the chaotic muck of presidential elections, only to fizzle out afterward. Thousands of people are sucked into the notion, that somehow this time, if the Democratic candidate is elected, there just might be real change. That’s right,

change we can believe in — spoon-fed to us by Barack Obama.

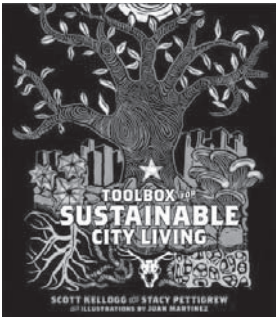
San Francisco activist hero Chris Carlsson’s refreshing book, *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners are Inventing the Future Today!*, is an encouraging diversion from the election chatter. Mixing an insider’s look at do-it-yourself (DIY) culture with a post-Marxist analysis, Carlsson highlights individuals who are organizing around practical community projects, rather than political parties or organizations (which Carlsson describes as “the hollow simulations that we call representative democracy”).

Carlsson captures a decentralized movement defined by people’s shared exhaustion from wage slavery and a political system that refuses to conceive of a world built from the creativity and concerns of ordinary people. Carlsson takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of edgy community gardens, “outlaw” bicycle culture, local biofuel production, autonomous computer culture and the “classlessness” and innovation at the weeklong

Burning Man festival.

While dry and intellectually dense at times, *Nowtopia* (which takes many examples from New York City) is an inspirational read for the burned-out worker looking for the confidence to break free of the daily grind and follow her heart.

A more hands-on guide to building a new world is Scott Kellogg and Stacy Pettigrew’s *Toolbox for Sustainable City Living*, containing basic recipes for all of life’s necessities — from composting toilets to biofuel production to rainwater collection systems to cultivating bugs for chickens. Select black-and-white photographs and simple pen-and-ink illustrations by Juan Martinez help us visualize how simple “simple living” can be. The authors contend that a massive social transformation is needed to overcome the fact that our society “has overextended its natural limitations in every capacity.” *Toolbox* authors promote the political philosophy of dual-power anarchism — simultaneously dismantling en-

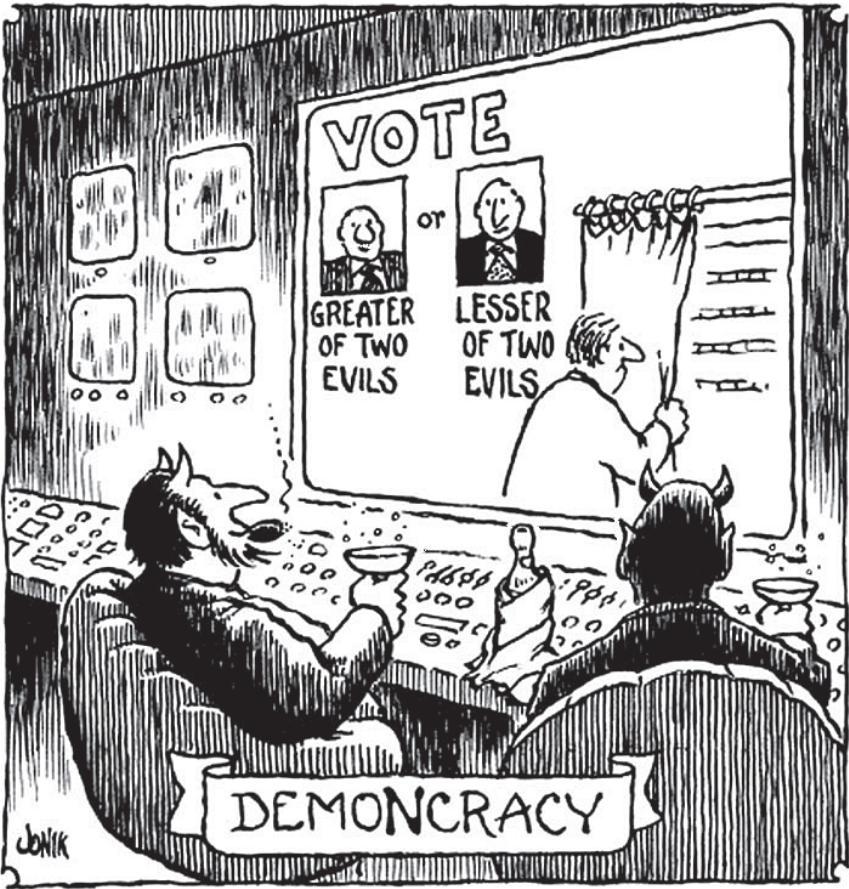


trenched power while building alternatives. These alternatives can only emerge locally from the principles of sustainability, egalitarianism and cooperation that “encourage further independence from the destructive and dangerously unstable dominant systems.”

The book examines simple systems — such as the experimentation of the Rhizome Collective in Austin, Texas, which the authors helped co-found — to inspire people to manage their own food production, waste, energy needs, water resources and bioremediation, without becoming “green consumers” in the process. A valuable resources section compiles how-to books and online information.

Change will not come by way of ballot or through Democratic leadership, *Nowtopia* and *Toolbox* both argue, but by a movement of grassroots lifestyle adjustments and on community-based projects that take on food autonomy, environmental protection, health care, education, media and sustainable infrastructure.

—JESSICA LEE





# Ruling Through Mismanagement

*The Wrecking Crew: How Conservatives Rule*  
BY THOMAS FRANK  
METROPOLITAN BOOKS, 2008

For evidence that the last eight years of Republican rule have represented continuous failure, some might point to the deceptive path to the disastrous Iraq War, the federal government’s “heckuva job” performance on Hurricane Katrina and now the great meltdown



of a deregulated Wall Street. But Thomas Frank, author of the superb recent bestseller *The Wrecking Crew*, explains such problems as the inevitable results of a new hardline conservative philosophy. This ideology views government first and foremost as a giant opportunity for private plunder, secondly as a resource to reward favored campaign contributors and finally, as a chance to show the public that they should rely exclusively on the market, not the hopelessly incompetent government. Judged by this standard, the Wrecking Crew Republicans have been spectacularly successful. In case anyone draws another conclusion — say, that the problem is with Republican vultures ruling the roost rather than government itself — the Republicans try to wipe their slate clean by claiming that certain excesses were committed merely due to the capital’s “culture of corruption.” What’s needed are “mavericks” like John McCain and Sarah Palin who can come in and “reform” government with bold ideas like completing George W. Bush’s program of tax breaks for the wealthy and “winning” the disastrous war in Iraq. After all, they’re

“outsiders” running against Washington. Somehow, even when the Republicans are in power, “The government is never theirs, no matter how much of it they happen to control,” Frank instructs us. Frank depicts today’s Washington as “democracy buried under a deluge of money.” Fortunately for the reader, the story of the Wrecking Crew’s work is relieved by Frank’s biting but understated wit and his keen eye for revealing detail, making the book a splendid, yet disturbing read. Frank illustrates how the K Street Project, spearheaded by then-House Speaker Rep. Tom DeLay, entailed business lobby groups ridding themselves of Democratic lobbyists and contributing exclusively to Republicans, in exchange for unparalleled influence in crafting industry-friendly laws. “It was a win-win proposition,” Frank points out. Grover Norquist, one of the central players in developing the ruling Republican strategy, lectured business leaders that they ought to invest more on campaign contributions and lobbying. Norquist pointed to a *Fortune* article that stated “the return on lobbying investments can be truly enormous,” using numbers like 163,356 percent profit rates to drive home the point. The porous border between lobbies and government brings us the spectacle of Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA), chair of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee, ramming through a Medicare

drug bill written precisely to the pharmaceutical industry’s specifications — explicitly forbidding the federal government from negotiating discounts for the public — and then being rewarded with a \$2 million position as the president of the drug industry’s lobbying organization. Even lobbyist Jack Abramoff’s downfall was dismissed by many conventional commentators as merely a inevitable case of him “going native” in the Washington “culture of corruption.” Meanwhile, the structural dependence of elected officials and candidates on ever-growing campaign contributions flowing heavily from America’s richest 1 percent — chiefly business leaders — was conveniently ignored. As Frank explains, “Instead of reinforcing the fragile institutions of civic trust you smash them, you encourage cynicism toward government, and if you get a chance you put the whole thing — conspicuously — on a for-hire basis.” Thus, we have the U.S. Department of Labor defining business — rather than workers — as its “primary customer.” We see the occupation of Iraq privatized, with the number of \$1,000-per-day mercenaries from Blackwater and other private firms roughly equivalent to the number of U.S. troops. Youthful Republican zealots were recruited by U.S. viceroy Paul Bremer to totally re-configure Iraq’s economy — without consulting any Iraqis — as a “free-market” paradise,

eliminating even the most urgently needed government functions, like cement factories to build protective walls against explosions. Much of Iraq’s worst aspects have been kept secret by Pentagon control of media access. But the full effects of the Wrecking Crew’s ideologically driven mismanagement were made clear to Americans by the pitiful response to Hurricane Katrina. As Frank acidly writes: “By now over \$100 billion has been spent, but parts of New Orleans remain empty. Repairing public housing seems to have been a low priority; rebuilding casinos an urgent one. All this might seem like social engineering in a cruelly 19th-century mode, but in fact it is the unavoidable result of a recovery plan comprised of tax cuts for entrepreneurs, fat handouts to chosen contractors and toxic trailers for those who can’t afford big handouts to the GOP.” This shameful episode reflects more than greed and opportunism in the face of unspeakable misery, Frank warns us. As the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens put it, the corruption of recent years is not simply a string of separate crimes but “a natural process by which a democracy is made gradually over into a plutocracy,” a government by and for the wealthy. —ROGER BYBEE

*This review has been excerpted from a longer version on independent.org.*

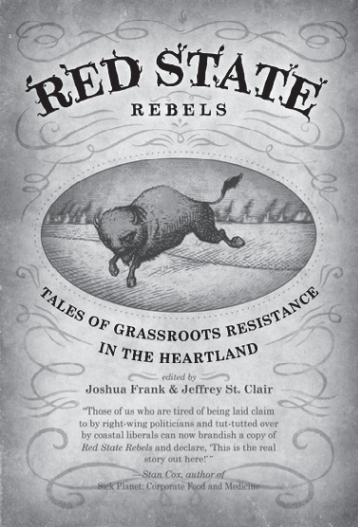
# Progressives in Flyover Land

*Red State Rebels: Tales of Grassroots Resistance in the Heartland*  
EDITED BY JOSHUA FRANK AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR  
AK PRESS, 2008

Having lived my entire life in the Midwest and South, I have heard the phrase “flyover states” more times than I can count. The little attention that these vast regions receive is dedicated to ridiculing them as backward and ignorant. Progressive politics, it is thought, only occurs in the urban areas of the East and West Coasts; the rest of the country is a mess of rightwing politics with little hope for change. *Red State Rebels: Tales of Grassroots Resistance in the Heartland* seeks to dismantle just such myths. By recounting dozens of instances of grassroots activism, editors Joshua Frank and Jeffrey St. Clair demonstrate that current “common knowledge” about the politics of the West, Midwest, Southwest

and Southeast ignores present realities. In focusing on both historical and contemporary activism, *Red State Rebels* shows that these actions are not isolated incidents, but rather part of broader movements for justice. Journalistically written, the pieces in *Red State Rebels* cover a broad range of movements. Primarily focusing on environmentalism, antiwar organizing, [im]migration rights, Native American struggles and workers’ rights, the writers show a range of activism occurring across the nation and the diverse tactics utilized. In “How to Beat a Mining Company,” St. Clair illustrates how environmentalists in Oregon “banished North America’s largest gold mining company from the state of Oregon” by proposing statewide environmental safeguards. Ted Nace recounts how North Dakota farmers took on chemical manufacture Monsanto and won a statewide ban on genetically engineered wheat. “The Border Diaries” captures the oppression enacted daily

at the U.S.-Mexico border, the dignity with which [im]migrants struggle against deportation and the important work of No More Deaths in assisting [im]migrants with basic health treatment at the border. The compilation’s attention to Native American organizing is one of its major strengths. While



the breadth of most of the book creates a lack of depth in any specific movement discussed, this section’s specific focus allows for greater depth than found elsewhere in *Red State Rebels*. Essays interweaving the history of the theft of Native lands with current Native American organizing illustrate the profound legacy of Native American resistance against colonialism and genocide. The chapter “Indian Country” demonstrates that Native activists are waging fierce battles, from Ward Churchill in the academy to Cecelia Fire Thunder’s reproductive justice organizing. *Red State Rebels* is not without its flaws. While a few chapters touch on issues of gender justice and sexuality, in a book with more than 40 chapters, discussion of these issues is scant. By including more on organizing against heteropatriarchy, the editors could have further broken down the myth that women, trans and queer folks in the heartland are without political agency. Moreover, there is no

clear definition of what constituted a “rebel.” While most of the book seems to define “rebels” as people fighting against oppression and injustice, some chapters glorify individuals affiliated with the religious right and other sectors of the right wing for their anti-government politics. Even with its shortcomings, *Red State Rebels* strikes a key blow against the all-too-common belief that the majority of the United States is a conservative wasteland. The writers remind us that many people in these “flyover states” are following in the tradition of the American Indian Movement in Minnesota, the Black Freedom Movement of the South and miners’ struggles in Colorado. For hundreds of years, grassroots resistance has been nourished and grown in these lands that have been deemed politically irrelevant. We must recognize this history if we hope to connect and build stronger movements for real social justice across the United States. —LYDIA PELOT-HOBBS







# SUNY SOCIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE



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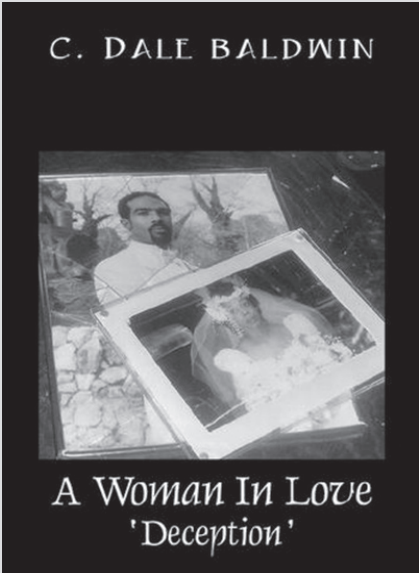
With budget cuts wreaking havoc on public education, the government can find endless money to build new prisons and fight new wars. The SUNY Social Justice Conference will be a staging ground for building a new movement for real change to open up our universities and realize a different world. The weekend will include networking, strategizing, live performances, a keynote lecture by Howard Zinn, and these (among other) amazing workshops:

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- Abolishing the Prison-Industrial Complex
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- Resisting Corporate Media
- Achieving Radical Reforms in the SUNY System
- War-Tax Resistance
- Women, Incarceration & Resistance
- Urban Sustainability
- Solidarity with Native Struggles
- Defending Affirmative Action
- Building Radical Mental Health Support
- The Farm Sanctuary Movement

To learn more about the conference or to pre-register, visit [www.sunysocialjustice.org](http://www.sunysocialjustice.org)

## A Woman In Love "Deception"

By C. Dale Baldwin

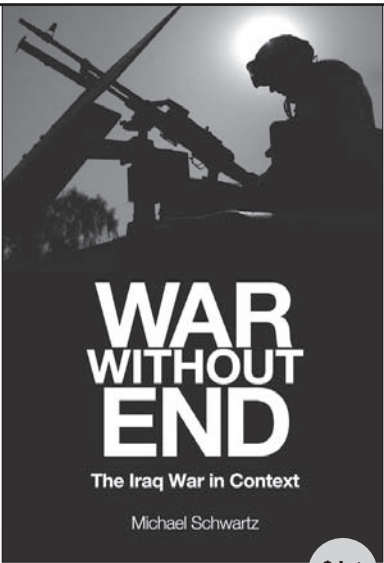


It's HD reading as extreme passion turns to depression for Clemintine when her husband's darkest secret is revealed, heightening psychotic episodes that are masked by tender love making and soothing words as she tries to come to terms asking herself, "Should I stay or should I go?"

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In this razor-sharp analysis, TomDispatch.com commentator Michael Schwartz demolishes the myths used to sell the U.S. public the idea of an endless "war on terror" centered in Iraq.



**WAR WITHOUT END**  
The Iraq War in Context  
Michael Schwartz

\$16

"Americans have all along needed a sociologist, not a general, to help them understand Iraq. They need to know about social movements, not just militias, and about oil politics, not just personalities in the news. We have the incredible good fortune that the perspicacious Michael Schwartz boldly stepped forward to cast floods of illumination on the Iraq War and its tragic social costs."

—Juan Cole, Informed Comment



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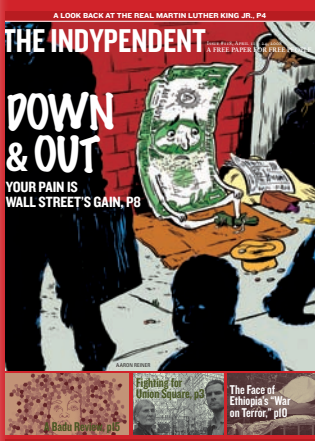
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